

My Thoughts on the Speaker Debate

by Ben Zeller on Wednesday, November 10, 2010 at 1:09pm

Dear SD18 Republicans,

Many emails are circulating regarding the speaker issue. I think it appropriate to share my thoughts on the issue.

I am among the many Conservatives who had been anticipating that with the strong gains Republicans achieved in the Texas House last Tuesday, we would also see the election of a new speaker.

The day after the election, I was quite shocked to see Speaker Joe Straus release a statement saying that he had the support of 122 State Representatives, including 76 Republicans.

Speaker Straus's statement, if it is to be taken at face value, did not mention the fact that many of these pledges were made earlier in the year and that the significant gains Republicans achieved on election day would allow us (Republicans) to confidently select a solid Conservative as our speaker without any interference from the Democrats (a far different scenario than in January 2009 where Joe Straus was selected by 64 Democrats and only 11 Republicans).

Among a list of other troubling actions (like appointing 24 Democrats to important committee chairmanships), Speaker Straus held a fundraiser for Democratic Patrick Rose in HD45 (which includes SD18's Caldwell County) - an effort that Jason Issac was able to overcome. While I haven't been able to nail down the exact role Straus played in this event (his spokesperson says he merely "attended" the event rather than "held"), that's not the most important question for us. Our goal in this debate is to simply answer the question: **who will most effectively carry our Conservative agenda into the next session?**

This undertaking should have nothing to do with protecting the political career of any individual. Nor is this debate causing division within the party. It's quite normal for multiple candidates to emerge in the selection of the speaker and for proponents of each to argue why their person is most deserving.

That is what's happening now.

The fact that Joe Straus is the current speaker is little reason to keep him there if he is not truly the one-out-of-ninety-nine best suited to advance our conservative agenda. With the 99 Republicans, we now have in the Texas House; Conservatives can be far more selective in choosing the speaker.

This is an area that will be pivotal in a successful legislative session. This is why I have signed on to a letter calling for the election of a new speaker. It is essential that your representatives hear from you about this. The debate is far from over; any representative can support anyone they choose, and your elected representative should know how you feel.

We scored a big Conservative win on Tuesday; I believe it would be another victory to elect a speaker who has a better track record of Conservative performance than Joe Straus. However, should Joe Straus emerge from our Republican controlled house as the speaker, I will most definitely support him, holding him to the same standard as anyone else that may hold the position. But I think we can do better, and now is the time for this debate.

Again, it's essential that your State Representative know how you feel about this issue, one way or the other. Of The 76 Republicans listed as allegedly supporting Joe Straus, at least five were from SD18.

Thanks,
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